

# The last word Fat and sassy

by the editors

from *Jump Cut*, no. 26, December 1981, p. 69

copyright *Jump Cut: A Review of Contemporary Media*, 1981, 2005

We have an abundance of good, exciting reviews and articles for upcoming issues. In fact, our desks are spilling over. This gratifies us very much in an era when so many left publishing ventures have gone under or lost their vitality. The energy of our Editorial Board and friends, our ongoing involvement in practical political activity and media work, our contacts with cultural activists around the world have all generated much material for which there are hardly any other outlets. It's our experience, in fact, that we've created a whole range of writing for people concerned, about culture and politics. We've set the pace, put topics on the agenda, and developed positions others have then had to address.

All this abundance, however, has created a problem — we can't publish the material fast enough and a backlog has built up. With our limited human and financial resources we've been able to publish only two or three issues a year. Last summer the three co-editors and the JUMP CUT group in Berkeley discussed this dilemma, searching for creative solutions.

We realized that in seven and one-half years JUMP CUT has changed. From frequent, short issues, concentrating heavily on Hollywood films, we've moved to less frequent, longer issues, covering a whole range of topics: especially radical film history, feminism and sexual politics, lesbian and gay male criticism, film theory, third world film, independent political films, reportage, pedagogy, and television. Clearly, one way to reduce the backlog of manuscripts would be to cut out some of these areas. There are, for example, readers who want us to return to our original concentration on Hollywood, while others want us to devote more space to theory or independent film. Yet in our discussions it was clear that we don't want to cut out any area of study. Dealing with all these different areas is vital to our conception of cultural work and to

our desire to provide the analytical tools people need to understand and change life under capitalism.

Furthermore, we want to continue publishing articles with a wide range of politics, writing styles, and levels of discourse. We see this diversity as one of the reasons for the magazine's vitality and wide readership in the face of a moribund capitalism and a bourgeoisie devoid of ideas or vision. By being open to a wide range of material we have encouraged new writers, women and third world writers, and people with unconventional ideas and stances as well as with valuable insights and information. Many of the finest articles we have published were rejected by other magazines as too political, too feminist, too strange, too complicated, too long — or just too uncomfortable. We have decided, in the short run at least, to tighten our criteria somewhat and to put more of the editing burden on writers so we can concentrate on production. But we don't see any valid way to reduce our abundance. Who would want to?

Therefore, we have turned to the area of production in search of a solution. With our limited editorial resources we can publish at most three or four issues a year. Although it is not possible to publish more frequently, it is our experience that once layout is under way we can expand issues relatively easily, as with our 60-page issue, No. 24/25. However, the heavy book paper we have been using since issue No. 14 limits the expansion of an issue; physically, because that paper is hard to fold, and financially, because it is very expensive relative to the newsprint we used for the first 13 issues. We cannot continue publishing 60-page issues on that paper.

Back in 1977 we switched to the book paper because people wanted to preserve many of the, articles they found in JUMP CUT for future reference. Also book paper doesn't yellow on newsstands where 60% of our sales take place. Certainly, the heavier paper looks, feels, and reads better. We get better photo reproduction with it. And it has become a fairly common and recognizable format for cultural magazines (e.g., *Art Week*, *Afterimage*, *New Art Examiner*). Although we had some worry about the loss of flexibility and the cost, we went ahead with the change.

However, we have had to reopen this question. Basically, our highest priority has always been to publish all the good radical writing on film and related topics we can, at a cost people can afford. At this moment in history, it is particularly important to provide good political cultural analysis, to bring writers, readers, and mediaworkers together, to provide the left with an active, engaged forum for discussion of key cultural issues, and to respond to immediate political needs of the movement. For these reasons, we must return to newsprint for the foreseeable future.

Factors that go into deciding what goes in an issues are overall balance

of the issue (a variety of styles, topics, etc.), clustering together complimentary and contrasting material, topicality of reviews and reports, length and space available, and whether something has been held over from previous issues. We know that long delay in handling and finally publishing some manuscripts is very hard on writers. We hope this new plan will speed things up. And we hope you will bear with us and continue to support JUMP CUT. Your support, interest, and feedback make it all possible.

---

[To top](#)   [Current issue](#)   [Archived essays](#)   [Jump Cut home](#)